

**Preserving a Safe and Reliable Water Supply
Council President Scott Peters, First District
For the Corridor News, September 2007**

When scattered showers are the lead story on the local newscast, you know you live in an arid climate. San Diego is no stranger to dry weather, but 2007 is shaping up to be one of the driest years in recent history. Historic dry conditions, coupled with even greater pressure on our outside water sources, make it essential that the region conserve even more. It is more important than ever that we maximize our current water supply, and ensure a safe and reliable source of fresh water for the future.

San Diegans have embraced water conservation, finding innovative ways to reduce their water use indoors, as well as outdoors. Low-flow toilets and showerheads save dozens of gallons of fresh water each day. Minor changes to landscaping and irrigation cycles help save water and lower your monthly water bill. Simple changes to our everyday routines have a big impact on water use. Running your washing machine and dishwasher only when full saves twenty gallons or more per cycle. Watering your yard thoroughly twice per week, as opposed to shorter, more frequent cycles, saves water and encourages strong roots. By implementing these simple measures, San Diego has maintained the amount of water used each year, even as our population has grown by almost 140,000 in the past 15 years.

Conservation is but one way to maintain the steady supply of fresh water our region needs to sustain economic and human development. A recent federal court ruling to protect an endangered fish in Northern California could mean a reduction of 30% or more in the amount of water shipped south through the state water project. It is imperative that we increase the amount of fresh water available locally, and reduce our reliance on imported supplies.

The County Grand Jury recently chided the City for dragging its feet on the plan to add highly-treated recycled water into the City's reservoirs. I have long been a proponent of this plan. It's not a new or unnatural concept. Every drop of water on the earth is recycled, having fed, bathed and sustained our ancestors for millennia. Decades of scientific research have shown that the use of highly treated recycled water is safe, and poses no threat to public health. Cities and water districts across the country use super-treated water to augment their water supply, including San Jose, Irvine and Denver.

It is my hope that the Mayor and City Council will come together with community leaders to support an education and outreach campaign to further the City's water reuse plan. I encourage you to learn more about the science behind water reuse on the City's website, www.sandiego.gov/water.

The scarcity of fresh water in California is reflected in the price we pay for it. The San Diego County Water Authority recently raised the price of the water it sells to the City of San Diego. Those costs will be necessarily passed on to consumers through your water bill.

On October 8 at 2:00 p.m., the City Council will consider changes to water and sewer billing to reflect that slight price increase, as well as to apply \$40 million in single-family wastewater rebates, required over the next four years by a court settlement. A typical family will see a water rate increase of roughly \$1.40 per month, with an average wastewater rebate of \$3.25 per month for eligible customers. The public is invited to attend the Council hearing and provide testimony.

A safe and sustainable source of fresh water is vital to the long-term economic and environmental health of our region. It is my hope that we can work together to find new ways to secure our water future.